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INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 RIYADH 008811

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/11/2016
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [EPET](#) [PTER](#) [ENERG](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: UNPRECEDENTED MEETING BETWEEN USG AND SAG ON
PETROLEUM INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JAMES OBERWETTER FOR
REASONS 12958 1.4 B, D, AND E

Summary

11. (S/NF) In light of recent threats to petroleum infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, on 31 October Vice Admiral Walsh, Commander U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Commander, U.S. Fifth Fleet, and Dhahran Consul General Kincannon met Saudi Arabian representatives from the Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF), Ministry of Interior (the Mabahith, Coast Guard, and the Facilities Security Forces) and Saudi Aramco for the first time at the King Abudulazziz Naval Base, in Jubail City. Vice Admiral (VADM) Walsh offered U.S. military support in thwarting potential attacks on critical Saudi infrastructure, and his staff briefed the Saudi Arabian representatives on Fifth Fleet capabilities. Rear Admiral (RADM) Fahad Ahmed Al Kayyal, Commander of the Eastern Fleet, led the Saudi delegation, welcomed assistance, and highlighted the need for technical information sharing.

Saudi Participation Included Key Agencies, Including
Newly-Established Facility Security Force (FSF)

12. (S) In addition to RADM Al Kayyal, most major Saudi Arabian security agencies were present at the meeting, including the Ministry of Interior, s newly-established Facility Security Force (FSF) formed to protect critical petroleum infrastructure. Key Saudi Arabian meeting participants included:

-- HRH Commander Sultan bin Khalid Al Faisal Al Saud, RSNF Special Forces, Commander Task Force 88;
-- Brigadier General Khalid Ali Al Humidan, Mabahith, "International Relations and Cooperation;"
-- Brigadier General Dr. Saad bin Khalid Al Jabri, Special Advisor to the Assistant Minister of the Interior for Security Affairs;
-- Brigadier General Abdul Rahman Ibrahim Ibrahim, Commander of the Border Forces (including the Coast Guard)

in the Eastern Province;
-- Major General Saad bin Mohammed Al Majid, Commander,
FSF;
-- General Abdullah Bin Y. al-Zahrani, Coast Guard
Commander, Jubail;
-- Mr. Samir Raslan, Saudi Aramco, General Manager
Industrial Security Operations;
-- Major General Ahmed bin Mohammad Al Rubayan, Eastern
Area Commander; and
-- Captain Mohammed al Amri, RSN Eastern Fleet Operations
Officer.

U.S. Mission participants included Dhahran Consul General
Kincannon, Acting Defense Attache Hobbes, and Energy Attache
Ross.

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VADM Walsh Upbeat on Cooperation to Protect
Critical Petroleum Infrastructure
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13. (S/NF) VADM Walsh stressed the U.S. Navy's willingness
to be of assistance in protecting critical Saudi petroleum
maritime infrastructure, and underscored his openness to
hearing all feedback on the usefulness of NAVCENT and
Coalition operations and the manner in which they are
conducted. His staff delivered a briefing on the Fifth
Fleet's maritime and aerial reconnaissance capabilities for
the Saudi interlocutors. VADM Walsh's staff offered
consequence management assistance in the event of a major oil
spill. Saudi Aramco's Samir Raslan noted Aramco was
generally well-prepared for even a major oil spill, but
welcomed assistance as needed.

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RADM Al Kayyal Stresses Need for Technical
Information Sharing and Coordination

14. (S/NF) RADM Al Kayyal thanked VADM Walsh and NAVCENT for
offering support and cooperation. Brigadier General Al
Humidan noted on-going threats to Saudi Arabian petroleum
infrastructure from Saudi Arabian extremists and Iraqi
national Abdul Hadi al-Iraqi, whom he characterized as "the
Al Qaida leader for Iraq, Syria, and the Arabian Peninsula."
RADM Al Kayyal noted the importance of information sharing
and coordination, and specifically requested technical
information exchange focused on threat tactics. He suggested
a data link via the Eastern Fleet as a mechanism for doing
so. He remarked positively on a previously-planned office
call for 1 November in Bahrain at the NAVCENT Headquarters.

RADM Al Kayyal Laments Difficulty of
Ascertaining Small Vessels' Intent

15. (S/NF) RADM Al Kayyal stressed the difficulties
confronting the RSNF in policing an Arabian
Gulf populated with many thousands of small fishing boats.
He regretted the difficulty of ascertaining the intent of
small vessels when they approach critical petroleum
installations, noting fishermen in the region predominantly
use small dhows and skiffs. He lamented problems with
evaluating the credibility of intelligence derived from the
Internet, such as recent threats against Ras Tanura petroleum
complex. He highlighted Ras Tanura's vulnerabilities,
stating the Sea Islands, North Pier, and South Pier are this
vast complex's most critical infrastructure. He remarked
coordinates from the latest threat intelligence could
indicate Al Qaida was using satellite imagery, not only
Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment on the ground.
RADM Al Kayyal underscored that terrorist groups only needed
to cause minor damage to a crude oil facility to shake up

international oil markets through media publicity.

Mabahith: We Need Original Text
for Intelligence Sharing

¶6. (S/NF) Brigadier General Al Humidan remarked on the need for the U.S. to share intelligence in original Arabic, rather than in translated form. He indicated the USG passed the SAG intelligence about an impending attack on the Iraqi al Basra Oil Terminal in translated form in 2004. He noted a critical word was mis-translated, leading the RSNF to look out for attacks on oil tankers, rather than for vessels launched by a specific tribal group in Yemen. In April 2004, U.S. Navy action thwarted a large attack on the oil terminal. However, 3 U.S. servicemen were killed when they approached and intercepted a traditional dhow, which then exploded. The speaker indicated that the mis-translation would have been obvious to a native Arabic speaker who had seen the original text, implying the RSNF would have been in a position to better understand and possibly prevent the attack.

Saudi Aramco Weighs In: Production Facilities not a
Critical Risk; Seaside Facilities Difficult to Protect

¶7. (C) Saudi Aramco,s Samir Raslan downplayed the firm,s vulnerabilities to terrorism against its production infrastructure. He stated the company operates 3500 oil fields, and Aramco can turn off pumping from any field from a central control center if needed. (Note: Raslan likely meant oil wells; Aramco operates approximately 80 oil fields, but more than a thousand wells. While Raslan is generally correct that Saudi Aramco,s production facilities are likely

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some of the least vulnerable parts of its infrastructure, his spin on Aramco,s large number of fields is a bit over-optimistic. While Saudi Aramco has many oil fields, production is heavily centralized in a small number. The Ghawar and Safaniya fields account for total production about 6 million barrels per day (mbpd) of the 9.1 mbpd Saudi Arabia typically produces. End note.) He noted Saudi Aramco considers Abqaiq, Ras Tanura, and the gas facilities as likely major targets. He remarked on the difficulty of protecting seaside facilities, as it was very easy to use a small dhow to carry out an attack. He noted Aramco had designated restricted zones around its seafront facilities marked by buoys, and used helicopters ferrying crews and catering to conduct routine aerial surveillance.

Aramco Complaint: Mistakes Cost Us Money

¶8. (C) Saudi Aramco,s Samir Raslan stressed the need for strong coordination when U.S forces are operating near Saudi Aramco facilities. He recounted one incident (Note: we believe this is an older incident) in which the U.S. Navy mistakenly boarded a Saudi vessel, setting off rumors in the "oil patch" of renewed hostilities in the Arabian Gulf. He complained such incidents damage Saudi Aramco financially, stating the incident cost the company \$50 million USD, but did not specify the nature of the costs. VADM Walsh acknowledged the incident, and RADM Al Kayyal noted the U.S. Navy had apologized for it. VADM Walsh agreed with Raslan on the need for strong coordination.

Commander Notes Concern with Possible
Attacks on Oil and Gas Tankers

¶9. (S) HRH Commander Sultan provided his ground-level

assessment of working day to day to protect Saudi Aramco facilities. He stated security patrols on most Saudi Aramco facilities are routinely monitored, presumably by those with intentions to attack the facilities. He believes most Saudi Aramco facilities present a sufficiently hard target to dissuade terrorists from attacking by sea. He instead argued tankers at major terminals were significantly more at threat than fixed facilities. He noted tankers often moor several miles away from major terminals, especially if they are too large for the berthing facilities. He noted these tankers enjoyed relatively little security while taking on their cargo, and it is relatively easy to penetrate the hull of an empty ship. He also expressed his concern with an attack on a gas tanker. (Note: Whether liquid petroleum gas (LPG) or liquefied natural gas (LNG), he could not say. End note.) He indicated the Saudi military had carried out simulations showing that, in the case of an attack on a gas vessel in Ras Tanura Channel, people as far away as Riyadh would die from secondary explosions.

Comment

¶10. (S) This meeting was a first in bringing the U.S. Navy together at a senior level with appropriate Saudi Arabian interlocutors at senior levels from across the RSNF and security agencies. VADM Walsh and RADM al Kayyal set a friendly tone for open cooperation and communication. VADM Walsh,s visit to Jubail was followed by RADM al Kayyal,s office call to NAVCENT,s Bahrain headquarters on the following day. We anticipate the meeting will prove to have appropriately set the stage to move forward with action items and a significant U.S. contribution to safeguarding critical Saudi Arabian petroleum infrastructure in the coming months.

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